Garden of Eaten

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Garden of Eaten

by heavensong

Summary

Plant AU:
Will Graham, an ex-cop turned gardener, finds himself face to face with a humanoid, plant-based creature hiding out in his greenhouse. Hannibal, as it introduces itself, holds a morbid curiosity about the workings of humans and their nature and, calling Will's nursery his new home, decides to take control of the lives around him. People are dying, but some aren't staying dead. Thanks to Hannibal's own secretive methods and a mysterious patch of garden (that seems to be growing), people who have been buried are returning to life, albeit... changed. The ratio of plant-people to the eternally-stressed Will Graham becomes wildly unbalanced as people seem to be disappearing or having "accidents". Hannibal's actions are starting to draw attention to Will's usually-deserted nursery and his hold of control on the situation seems to be slipping more and more. His relationships are tested and new bonds are formed as the greenhouse receives new guests.

(Wow look at that stupid pun/excuse for a title. omg i'm so sorry)

Notes

AU Inspired by http://stupidcrown.tumblr.com/ and
http://furiarossaandmimma.deviantart.com/ 's additions.

I love everything about the "Little Shop of Cannibals" Hannigram AU and I wanted to write my own take on the plant-creature thing so... here you go! Please go visit both their pages and tell them how awesome they are! Ahhh I also haven't written in a very long time so please excuse the awkwardness as I try to get back into the swing of things! UvU

Chapter 1

There was the deafening sound of his pulse in his ears, blood thundering throughout his skull and muting him from the sounds of the outside world. He blinked twice in an attempt to clear the haze he was feeling, but the vision that resurfaced was more nightmarish than he'd expected. The bloodied corpse of Garret Jacob Hobbs stood before him, head lilting to the side staring back vacantly as Will began to shiver in horror. His fists clenched unconsciously, the motion alerting him to the gun he held. As his hold loosened, the weapon slid from his sweaty palms and clattered to the floor. His whole form seemed to quake in response, vibrating like it was trying to keep warm. The sound of his pounding heart seemed to speed up and intensify, causing him to lurch forward and clutch at his skull. A scream pierced the heavy air around him and his eyes shot open, suddenly realizing the sound was coming from his own mouth.

Something soft batted him in the face and silenced his shouts. Will blinked the sleep from his eyes and squinted through his lashes. The plastered, white ceiling was now the only sight before him, rather than the ghastly visage reminding him of the last time he'd fired a gun.

Another column of fluff fell across his face, his nose crinkling in response as it tickled him again and again. He smiled, not nearly as reluctantly as one would've come to expect, and scratched the animal at the base of its tail. Truth be told, he was incredibly thankful for being awoken in a manner more pleasant than he was accustomed to. "Hey Winston. C'mon, time to get some breakfast, eh?"

Will swung his legs over the edge of the bed and felt his feet touch the smooth, wooden floorboards. Two more of the animals who had been dozing at the foot of his bed, rose at the sudden movement and excitedly followed him to the kitchen. As he approached the cupboard, the remaining three dogs gathered around him, eager for his attention and the food he was sure to dish out. Their bowls were filled and quickly surrounded by hungry muzzles, Will standing back to allow them better access. He let out a quiet chuckle and watched them for a bit before walking to the windows and peering outside. It was a nice enough day out, the sky above bright, albeit a little cloudy. He was grateful for the almost-cheerful weather, seeing as he'd be doing some planting outside today. From his kitchen windows he could make out little sprouts peeking up through the soil in pots on the front porch.

"Alright guys, out you go." Will shuffled past the happy canines and swung open the front door, allowing them to bound through the yard and roll around. After a good while he whistled for them to come back inside so he could get ready to leave for work. They quickly obliged and he went about showering and dressing himself, stopping to devour an apple before he left.

He arrived at the little nursery, plucking the keys from his coat pocket and letting himself into the shop portion. Making his way to the greenhouse near the back of the property, Will

flicked on a few lights and slid off his jacket, replacing it with a clean white apron. He approached the tinted doors of the greenhouse and entered, pushing past a few ferns in need of a trim and kicking some displaced mulch out of the walkway. The glass building was nearly overwhelming with its variety of foliage. Soft light filtered in through the panels in the ceiling and flickered over the leaves and petals that surrounded the minimal concrete walkways. The whole place was a little overgrown, to say the least, but that was the way he liked it; A place for the plants to live and grow freely, without the confines of tiny plastic pots like in those huge chain stores. It seemed wrong to have everything immaculate and pristine when it came to gardening. Plants should be able to thrive as they do out in the wild, and that sometimes required a little bit of oversight when it came to messy workspaces.

He came to a large, wooden table and swept a few more bits of mulch from its surface. There was a little terra-cotta planter on top, filled with soil and ready to be relieved of its temporary and quickly-budding guests. They'd grown too big for their current home and it was time to replant them outside so they could grow to their full size in comfort.

Will had hoisted the planter off the table and was heading out of the greenhouse when he heard a rustling of leaves. He was tempted to blame it on a wayward breeze, but all the window panels were locked tight from the previous day, making a cause like that unlikely and spurring his imagination to run wild. Though the inhabitants of the greenhouse technically did move as they grew ever so slowly, there was no way they could cause such a sudden noise. Could it have just been his imagination? After a few moments of silence, the planter feeling heavier by the second, he resigned that this must have been so.

It had taken a little over an hour to carefully replant the budding greenery, inspecting each leaf after he'd settled it into the new soil. Satisfied with his work, Will brushed the dirt from his hands and made his way back to the greenhouse, a lighter terra-cotta planter now in tow. Once back inside, he gave the place another once over, eyes scanning the canopy-like structure of creeping vines and the jasmine starting to bloom at the fringes. He smiled to himself and shrugged, deciding he should at least trim the ferns near the entrance and by the paths at closing time. He found himself waiting in the quiet for a few moments, listening for any more rustling leaves or imagined breezes. After hearing nothing but the sprinkling system gearing up to water the leftmost quadrant of the greenhouse, he was satisfied enough to return to the shop front.

Business was slow for the majority of the day, his only guests being the usual window-shoppers on their way home from work and a wayward teen looking to impress his girlfriend. He wasn't sure how enthralled she'd be with the three carnations and the prickly little cactus that he'd described as "punk-rock" and "easy to take care of". Will checked the clock and let out a brief yawn as he moved to the entrance, flipping the sign so that it read '*CLOSED*' to the outside world. Grabbing a pair of shears, he meandered back towards to greenhouse again, apathetic about his earlier promise to finally clip those damn ferns. One last small chore and then he'd be home with the dogs, relaxing in front of the television as they surrounded him.

As soon as he stepped through the glass doors, he felt something was off. The air was slightly more humid than usual, though it had been warm today and the ventilation *was* in need of cleaning. Still, the dewy smell rose up from all around him and invaded his nostrils, hot and potent. Will took a step off of the pathway, hesitant and soft on the mulch as it sunk beneath him. The sun was beginning its descent; Bright blue dissolving into oranges and pinks above. Another rustling of leaves sounded to his left, Will whipping his head that way in response. The ferns long-forgotten, he held the shears in front of his chest as he continued forward and closer toward the source of the foreign sound. A voice stopped him in his tracks.

"Wh-what?" He own voice, barely a whisper, sounded alien to him in the otherwise silent greenhouse. The shears, gripped tightly in his hands, cast an X-shaped shadow over his chest in the waning daylight.

"Come closer. I can't see you."

He must have been hearing things. Had somebody actually managed to sneak into his shop and hide out all day without him noticing? Why would anyone even want to do that? "… What are you doing here?" Will responded, no longer whispering but still quiet. His pace was slow but he had begun to advance again.

A dark, low sound came from the gloomy patch of shade, just a few feet away from where Will stood. Laughter? It must have been, but it spoke again before Will could get another question out. "Shouldn't you introduce yourself first? You are a guest in my home, afterall…"

Will's brow furrowed, the words forming and about to leave his lips before he froze in place. Whatever had been talking to him from the shadows had pushed away an overhanging laurel, revealing it's face. It stepped forward, Bleeding Hearts and Oriental Poppies grasping at his pant legs as he moved through them. Yellow eyes glinted back at Will, their gaze heavy-lidded and poised. This thing, or whatever it was, could not be described as human, except for it's shape and manner. Still, it held out a hand in a polite and inviting gesture. It nodded as if to urge him on.

"W-Will. Graham. My name is Will Graham…" He choked out the words, unable to keep the slight stutter out of his voice.

"Well then Mr. Graham…" The hand, still held aloft, reached forward and touched the shears, lowering them slightly to better glimpse the awestruck gardener's face. "Please, call me Hannibal. It's a pleasure to meet you."

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

> This chapter's a little longer. I'll try to keep that up! Thanks so much for taking the time to read!

He thought of bolting towards the greenhouse's doors, temporary salvation waiting for him on the other side. His mind screamed for him to take a step backward, at the very least, but he found himself frozen where he stood.

"I don't plan on leaving any time soon… So we might as well become better acquainted, don't you think?" Hannibal gently ran a hand over Will's, wordlessly suggesting he drop the shears. Will's own hands however, remained locked in place, fingers wrapped tightly around the rubber handles. The creature let his fingers play deftly over the blades before returning his limbs to their position at his sides, a subtle smile now visible over his features. Will remained perfectly still, his eyes tracing the movement of the other man's hands before resting on his face.

"What… wh-what *are* you?" He managed to stammer out, swallowing back a shuddering breath.

The creature's lips parted, revealing subtly sharpened teeth. "Does that really matter?"

A pregnant pause.

"I suppose it does then." He cleared his throat, running a hand over his hair and stepping further out of the shadows. The creature made a sweeping gesture with both arms, bowing his head slightly. "I am all of this, Mr. Graham. All of this in a neat package, capable of listening and understanding and responding in turn."

Even in the dimming light, Will could make out the greenish pallor of the strange man's skin and the peculiar way the branches overhead seemed to cling to him. His eyes widened slightly at the realization that, as he moved further away from the canopy, the branches remained. Several large, antler-like laurels protruded from the man's skull and shoulder blades, leaves wavering gently as he moved. This thing was a plant then? He didn't remember planting any 'creepy-intellectual-smooth-talking-monster' seeds. He had to be dreaming. He *had* to be dreaming…

"…What are *you*?"

"What?"

"I am merely curious of the same subject you inquired of me."

Will started at the question, his mouth opening and closing a few times before finally deciding how he was going to respond. He straightened his posture a bit and tilted his head to the side. “I’m… much simpler than that I guess. A human. That’s… really it.”

Hannibal laughed again, and Will couldn’t help his lips curling slightly to smile back, despite the unpleasantness of the sound.

“I do not think that is all there could be to you, Will.”

At the sudden use of his first name, Will pursed his lips. What was even happening here? He was conversing with… with a plant of all things. He’d heard of talking to plants to help them grow, but this was ridiculous. None of his questions had been graced with a straight-forward answer either; the creature before him appearing to have quite the skill when it came to elusive conversation. This… Hannibal… seemed to know much more than he was letting on, that much was clear. Will wasn’t sure how much he wanted to know, to be truthful, though curiosity was a powerful thing.

“How did you get here? And what do you want?” His voice was stronger now, reinforced by his own, genuine interest in the subject at hand. The shears in his hands had been lowered to his waist, guard still up but significantly lessened. Hannibal’s golden gaze flickered to the blades, noticing their descent and deciphering what the gesture meant. Trust, perhaps… even if minute. The very idea sounded fruitful to his eventual needs.

“I’m afraid I am unable to answer your questions. My existence here is a mystery, even unto myself… though I do not feel out of place.” Another understated smile crossed his lips, sending a chill down Will’s spine. “As for what I desire…” Hannibal raised a brow and took in his surroundings. “A place to reside quietly in would be most satisfactory. I hope you don’t mind.”

Will frowned, his mind racing to conjure up a proper reaction. Before he could speak again, Hannibal continued.

“It’s rather late, don’t you think?” The creature nodded up at the vaulted glass ceiling, moon now glowing against the cloudy night skies. “I think I shall be turning in for the night.” He turned away from the other man and strolled back into the shadows. “I’ll see you in the morning, Will. It was a pleasure to meet you.” Hannibal’s farewell was curt but strangely polite, the rustling of leaves dissolving into silence as he disappeared among the foliage. Will was left alone with his thoughts, shears now completely forgotten as his arms fell limply at his sides. He stared at the spot where his new guest had vanished into and let out a pent-up breath. There was no way he’d be following after the strange plant-man… Not alone at least. He took another glance up at the ceiling where Hannibal had pointed only moments ago. The moon was in clear sight, gibbous and haloed by darkness, as if the clouds where afraid of getting too close.

Will turned around and walked out of the greenhouse, not once daring to look back, even as he threw off his apron and grabbed his keys. He kept his gaze down while he walked to the car and got in quickly, agitated nerves starting to take hold as he struggled to turn the key in the ignition. The drive home felt like a dream, unreal and over before he realized he’d even started.

The dogs were let out, called back in, and fed and petted as they demanded his attention. He performed the actions of cooking a meal and cleaning dishes robotically, his mind far, far away from the current tasks. Finally, he let himself fall into bed, Winston and Buster curled up on either side of his legs. The white plaster ceiling seemed to stare back at him tonight, making him nervous every time he chanced to blink. He couldn't remember falling asleep.

His sleep was fitful as usual, but the nightmares seemed to linger and antagonize his subconscious. There was Garret Jacob Hobbs, in his usual bloodied attire, glaring out from cloudy, dead eyes and quirking an unsettling smirk. He seemed to float forward, the darkness biting at the edges of his form as he glided effortlessly across the abyss. Will felt like a statue, stationary and stoic; immovable, even by his own resolve. He desperately wanted to pull away, but the gun was there again, resting heavily in his palm while his pointer flexed against the trigger. There was the absence of his thundering heartbeat this time, the cacophony replaced by an ominous silence. He never would have guessed how much more unpleasant the lack of sound would have been. He opened his mouth to shout but the world around him was inexplicably muted, a feeling almost reminiscent to being underwater. His fingertip curled tightly around the trigger, the gun firing in slow motion as he opened his eyes. The figure before him jolted violently back, body convulsing as the shots hit their mark. The final shot rang out and decimated the silence, the hole-ridden figure of Garret Jacob Hobbs dropping out of sight and into the void around them. The nightmare ended with Will on the floor, tangled up in his sheets, a few dogs looking over him curiously and licking at the soles of his feet.

"Ah- Jesus! Shit..." Will rubbed his eyes with the back of his arm, wiping away the sleep and residual tears. He pulled his legs from the knotted sheets and petted the animals that had swarmed around him, letting them know he was okay. Standing slowly, his legs still wobbled a little as he headed towards the kitchen.

Garret Jacob Hobbs was somebody he'd like to forget about. The man returning in these nightmares, night after night, was a constant reminder of the most traumatizing moment of his previous occupation. Originally, being a cop seemed like the right thing to do; the obvious choice in career. He'd been good at his job too, and the gun training always relieved stress after a particularly hard day. Now, anyone would be lucky to see Will Graham ever lay hands on a firearm, let alone use it. The man was a serial killer… and offing a murderer was better than finding more of his innocent victims, or whatever remained of them. Still, the experience had left Will traumatized. The man's daughter had been there, and was so close to losing her own life. He recalled that image: Abigail Hobbs' face contorted in fear and confusion, the blade at her throat, and remembered how it had made his blood boil and his heart race. The world had gone black and then her father was dead, slumped against the blood-streaked wooden cabinets and dead eyes gazing at nothing. The bullet holes in Hobbs' chest, dark and weeping, had brought an unmistakable and terrible swell of contentment that

he felt plainly in his own heart. That feeling was why Will had quit his job. That feeling was why he couldn't continue the way he was and why he had turned to gardening to sort out his own emotions. It was why he was scared of himself and why he couldn't quite maintain proper eye contact. He closed that chapter of his life and opened up a little nursery, just off the main road downtown, planning to never deal with that sort of violence again. He didn't think the next chapter would hold a completely different kind of mania…

He tried not to think at all as he went about his morning tasks: Put food in the dog bowls. Let them out to run. Call the dogs back in. Shower and dress. Try not to forget to eat something. Wipe off some dog hair before giving up and walking out the door. He wore a blank expression and moved stiffly about the house, though if the dogs noticed they gave no indication.

Not an hour later, Will found himself sitting in his car and staring listlessly out the window. His eyes moved to his shop, the *'CLOSED'* sign still facing outwards, yellow letters cheerful against the dark interior of the store. A minute or two passed by with no movement on his part, save for the occasional nervous shifting in his seat. After a few more moments watching the second hand tick by on his wristwatch, a tired and reluctant Will Graham finally stepped out of his car and headed indoors.

There was nothing different about the store front today. Everything was where he'd left it the night before, including the shears which were carelessly dropped on the counter, a little soil still clinging to the handles. The very sight of them brought queasiness to his stomach. The last time he held those clippers was in the greenhouse… which was also where he'd have to return if he wanted to get much work done today. Which he really didn't care about at this point… What he *wanted* was to avoid going back into that building, at all costs. Because it would mean facing his own insanity or, if not that, the enigmatic plant-creature that now resided there. Either seemed a little too much for him to bear.

He fooled around at the front of the shop for a bit, wasting time by wiping the counters down and adjusting stems of the potted plants he had out on display. Drumming his fingertips on the counter got old after about five minutes, checking the clock on the wall every time the clock ticked sixty times. He counted the seconds down in his head: one, two, three, four… And that was enough of that. Will let out a soft sigh before straightening up and headed back towards the greenhouse.

The tinted doors opened smoothly and welcomed him in, still-untrimmed ferns another reminder of his new guest as they brushed against his arms. He'd brought along the shears again this time, partially because they should be put back where they belonged and partially because he was feeling a familiar twinge of nerves creeping up his back. On his way to the workbench he glanced over his shoulder at the murky patch of greens where he had been enticed to approach the night before. There didn't seem to be anything there though, the

foliage opening up and outward, exposing only the bare patch of soil, ready for planting but empty all the same. The corner of his mouth twitched a little, almost relieved, as he turned back to the table to set down the clippers. He was interrupted by the soft twitching of branches and a slight breeze at his back. Will whipped around at the sound only to find there was nothing there. He did, however, notice that several window panes had been cracked open, letting in the fresh air he'd just felt.

The faint sound of somebody humming made his heart leap in his chest. Will looked around wildly, his eyes searching the vegetation for anything out of the ordinary but finding nothing. The shears were carried along once more as he made his way off the concrete pathway and towards the direction of the melody. It was an unmistakably male sound, and he had a feeling he knew exactly who it belonged to, though the tune was even more familiar than the voice… Some piece by Schubert… or was it Chopin? He wasn't exactly a classical music buff, but the melody was certainly distinct enough for him to recognize it.

"How do you know that song…?" Will peeked out from behind a sprawling shrub, his face shrouded by leafy shadows. Hannibal was there, only a few paces away, hand watering a patch of minutely neglected herbs and humming along to himself. A smile found its way over his olive features as soon as he noticed Will's approach.

"Will. Good morning." Hannibal pulled back the watering can and faced the gardener. "How are you?"

"I, uh…" He stepped out from the brush and awkwardly shrugged, clippers hanging lamely at his side. He hadn't quite expected such a friendly greeting. "Alright… I guess? Why are you watering the plants?"

"They looked a bit thirsty. This back corner doesn't seem to get much attention, I'm afraid." The creature replied amicably. His gaze drifted to the shears in Will's hand before blinking back and looking away. "Again with those clippers, I see."

Will looked at the blades for a moment before setting them down on the ground and stepping forward. "Sorry… So the herbs… You say they're not getting enough water?"

This seemed to satisfy Hannibal, as he went back to tending the wilted plants in front of him. "Yes. Your sprinkler system is a bit sparse in this area of the garden. It's alright; I quite enjoy the opportunity to help." Another subtle smile as he tilted the can, letting out the last drops of liquid.

"Well, ah… thanks." Will felt at a loss for words as he watched the other man calmly help with his morning chores. "I guess I'll, um, get back to the front of the shop then… You okay back here, then?"

Hannibal nodded without looking up, choosing instead to maintain his attention to the herbs, gently inspecting each leave and stem. Will swallowed back his next words and turned to leave, but not before glimpsing a slender vine creep out from the collar of Hannibal's shirt. It slithered to the watering can, curled around it, and dragged it over to a spigot in the wall nearby, probably intending to refill the container and continue watering. Will once again left the greenhouse feeling shaken and unsettled, and the sentiment remained for the majority of

his work day. Even as he made the final sale of the day, a small bouquet of yellow and red roses, he felt the uneasiness around him like a vice. The sign on the front door read ‘CLOSED’ once again and he flicked the little bell above to punctuate the act before taking off his apron and heading back behind the shop. The doors were opened once more and Will was greeted by Hannibal’s friendly voice.

“Welcome back. Was your day pleasant?”

Will groaned under his breath before replying. “It was… alright I guess. I’m pretty tired.” He rubbed the back of his neck and crouched down to pluck at a few blades of grass, having resigned to his fate of chatting with a plant that could talk back. “I haven’t been sleeping too well lately.”

“I can see that. Would you like to discuss it?” Hannibal faced Will completely, his hands clasping each other behind his back. “I am a very good listener.”

He gave the man an odd look before turning back to look at the grass again. “…sure, why not.” He told Hannibal all about his recurring nightmares, the story behind them, his growing weariness; it all spilled from him like a waterfall, words gushing forth and running together. All the while, Hannibal listened, his expression steady. It was only when Will let out a wavering breath and finished did he even begin to speak.

“I believe you are on the right track to recovering some stability, Will.” Hannibal touched a hand to Will’s shoulder in a comforting gesture. “And how are you feeling now? Relieved?”

Will leaned into the touch and furrowed his brows. “Yes… actually. A little. I haven’t really talked about this since it happened… and I’m not too fond of the idea of going to see a therapist.”

“I am always here to listen, Will. It is the least I can do.” He smiled down at the gardener and gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze. “Discussing what troubles you can be therapeutic… If you do not wish to see somebody else to talk about these things, please, feel free to converse with me.”

“Yeah… I guess that could work.” Will looked up at Hannibal and quirked a shaky smile in return. “Thanks.”

“It’s a pleasure, Will.”

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